

## Empowering Excellent Readers by Providing Individual Attention

*The story below is from Louis Jones, a second year Solid Ground Reading Corps member. Jayden is a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student at Emerson Elementary in Seattle.*

Although an enthusiastic reader, Jayden struggled with vowel blends and other letter combinations. This kept him from being a fluent reader who could focus on understanding entire sentences and concepts.

After working with him for most of the year, Louis was happy to see a slight spike in his Spring MAP scores, but knew that he was still behind grade level. Upon returning for a second year with the WRC, Louis volunteered to tutor him again in a small-group, and was excited to find that he'd made great improvements in his decoding skills over the summer.

"It's strange how some students make steady gains throughout the year, while others seem to make large jumps in progress all at once. Jayden didn't show much growth last year through his test scores, but a combination of steady reinforcement and increased mental maturity helped him finally get over the hump and see some real improvements. This is not to say that Jayden doesn't have room for more growth," says Louis. He will soon start Jayden on the Reading A-Z curriculum. This set of books focuses on reading retention and comprehension.

Jayden is becoming a fluent reader, but sometimes struggles focusing on one task for an extended period of time, so Louis and Jayden will discuss and summarize each page they read together and go over comprehension questions after they finish the story. It takes a village to raise a child, and the WRC team looks forward to connecting with Emerson educators to help Jayden become a fluent and enthusiastic reader.



Over the course of two years, WRC member Louis Jones was able to see longitudinal results of early intervention and steady reinforcement.

## MLK Day of Service 2011 Tax Credit Awareness Campaign

For those of you still looking for an opportunity to participate on MLK Day of Service, the Tax Credit Awareness Campaign is another means for you to help alleviate poverty in the communities where you serve. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the federal government's largest and most effective anti-poverty programs, where families and individuals who work but make very low incomes can gain federal tax credit.

*"Help eligible  
workers in your  
community  
learn about  
low-income tax  
benefits"*

The EITC helps reduce the federal tax burden on low-income workers, supplements wages, and helps workers build long-term assets to lift families out of poverty. Unfortunately, each year millions of eligible workers miss out on this important federal tax benefit because they do not know about the program, do not know how to claim the credit, or do not know where to find free tax filing. Outreach efforts by AmeriCorps members and their projects can help ensure that eligible workers claim the tax credits they earned.

If you are still seeking an opportunity to participate on MLK Day, please review below additional information and links to resources that can help you plan a tax credit awareness activity.

## Supporting Early Education and Learning

*The story below is from Caitlin Odell, a ESD 112 Reading Corps member serving at the White Salmon Head Start. White Salmon is a rural community located about a hour and a half East of the Vancouver metro area in the Columbia River Gorge.*

"Because I work in one classroom with kids of varying abilities, it has been difficult to pin down effective, engaging activities for everyone. One aspect of my role in the classroom that I find useful is my one-on-one role with the students which ultimately changes their overall behavior and attitude towards literacy. One child, Quinn, is extremely bright but has a lot of behavioral problems because of boredom in the classroom. He already knows all of the letters and many of the phonemes, and instantly becomes intrigued when he is being intellectually challenged.

Giving him one-on-one lessons has been a good method to iron out his disruptive behavior in the classroom. He has warmed up to me pretty quickly, and I have taken to teaching him to spell and read simple words such as "cat" during work time when I'm trying to teach letters to small groups. It is extremely satisfying when he goes around the room and spells out a word I taught him a day or so ago. It

gives him incentive to follow directions knowing he will get this sort of mental challenge and makes it a better learning environment for the rest of the children because of the less disruptive behavior from the student."

Caitlin's ability to work one-on-one has allowed Quinn to increase his ability to recognize letters, sounds, and small words and better prepare him for reading success when he enters elementary school. Caitlin was able to learn a unique way to manage disruptive behavior in her classroom, this is a technical skill that she will use again during her service with WRC and if she enters into a career in

education. This story is important because it captures the value that WRC volunteers have in the early learning classroom. In many classrooms teachers are not able to provide focused one-on-one attention to students like Quinn, but by having WRC volunteers these students who may otherwise be over looked are provided individualized instruction and attention.

*"Caitlin found creative ways to manage Quinn's disruptive behavior by providing one-on-one attention, and opportunities to be intellectually challenged".*

## Building a Grad Nation Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic

*Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic* is a report released by America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, and John Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center discussing challenges and strategies to overcome poor graduation rates. The report highlights some successful strategies to prevent High School dropouts by targeting some of the lowest performing high schools and elementary schools.

There is a strong connection between poverty and education. Low income high achievers, from pre-school to high school, do less well in school than their peers. According to the National Assessment of Educational progress, in 2009 more than 80 percent of low-income students failed to score proficiently on national exams. Children who can't read by 4<sup>th</sup> grade are put on a dropout track.

*"Children who can't read by the 4th grade are put on a dropout track"*

The Washington Reading Corps (WRC) plays an important role in education reform, bringing together national service, partners from state agencies, and local non-profits. Many of you are on the front lines of seeing the direct results of the success of AmeriCorps Programs in strengthening individuals and communities. Engaging students from pre-school through sixth grade, WRC members build relationships with struggling youth by providing extra attention and support through reading tutoring. Surrounding research suggests that dropout prevention begins way before high school, with reading literacy as the foundation of academic and social emotional success.

WRC helps address nonacademic risk factors that hinder a student's ability to gain a strong foundation of literacy skills. The correlation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be applied to community transformation and address challenges within education and graduation rates. Embracing the needs of students by pulling together community volunteers is a powerful and effective means to transform schools and keep students engaged in learning until they leave with a diploma in hand. National Service is a critical part of this strategy.

To read the full report, go to <http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx>

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